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Some Important Projectile Point Types from Nebraska

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Some Important PROJECTILE POINT TYPES From Nebraska

Archaeologists apply the term "projectile point" to a wide range of tools. Although they used to think projectile points were used only for spears, they now realize that the heavier, ill-shaped points were used as knives. (Ahler 1971).

Projectile points can be made from just about anything that can be sharpened, including stone, glass, wood, bone, and metal. Flaked stone points are most common in Nebraska, although metal points and occasionally bone points have been found.

Points, Time, and Culture

Projectile points are classified according to their physical characteristics of material, shape, size, and manufacture. While this classification gives us a general idea of their age and cultural affiliation, the information often is not very specific. Some projectile point types are found from the Rocky Mountains to the eastern seaboard and from Canada to Texas over a span of several thousand years.

However, within restricted areas the time span and cultural affiliation of many projectile point types seem to be much more restricted (Frison, Wilson and Wilson 1974). In Nebraska we still need to learn a great deal about the age and distribution of all point types. This can only be done by careful scientific excavation of prehistoric sites throughout the state.

The amateur can help in several ways. He should collect materials only from the surface, since digging destroys the cultural record. He should catalog his collection by giving each collecting locality a number.

Then he should number, in order, the artifacts from each site and record this information in a notebook (see box). The catalog is a permanent record which can be used to gain an understanding of the archaeology of our state.

Finally, the amateur should talk to professionals who can combine the data from many collections to develop the statewide prehistoric record. Professionals agree that most important sites were discovered by amateurs.

The Manufacture of Flaked Stone Tools

Stone projectile points are usually flaked from some kind of silica dioxide such as flint, chert, chalcedony, jasper, or obsidian; the more homogeneous the better. Some favored varieties were carried many hundreds of miles from their place of origin.

The flakes on a projectile point are made by the cone principle; lines of force radiate from the point of impact just as concentric ripples radiate from the point where a pebble has just been dropped into the water. This impact can be applied by percussion (hitting with a hammer) or by pressure (forcing a tool against the edge of the stone).

The force and direction of the impact determine the size and shape of the flake removed. A hard hammer (flint, steel, or hard wood) will tend to produce a more abrupt and deeper flake scar than a softer hammer made of antler or bone. Pressure flakes are usually smaller and more carefully placed than percussion flakes.

Once the technique has been learned, a skillful flint knapper can produce a good point in a matter of minutes.

Suggested format for permanent collection catalog

Date	Site #	Artifact #	Comments
May 15, 1976	3	2	Small side-notched point of gray chert
	3	3	End scraper, moss agate
May 16, 1976	7	2	Base of corner-notched point, brown chalcedony
	7	3	7 stone chips found next to charcoal stain, burned bone nearby

Some Projectile Point Types

(The projectile points shown here are all life sized.)

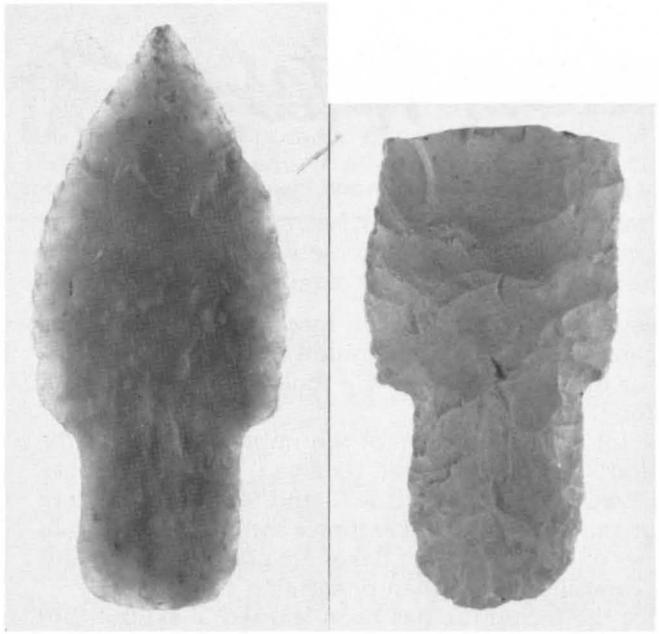
Alberta Points

Alberta points are medium to large sized dart points with a broad blade, square shoulders, and a wide rectangular stem with a straight to slightly convex base. They are usually 3 to 4 inches long with the blade 1¼ inches wide. They differ from the Scottsbluff point mainly because they are larger, the stem is longer, and the tip is often somewhat blunted.

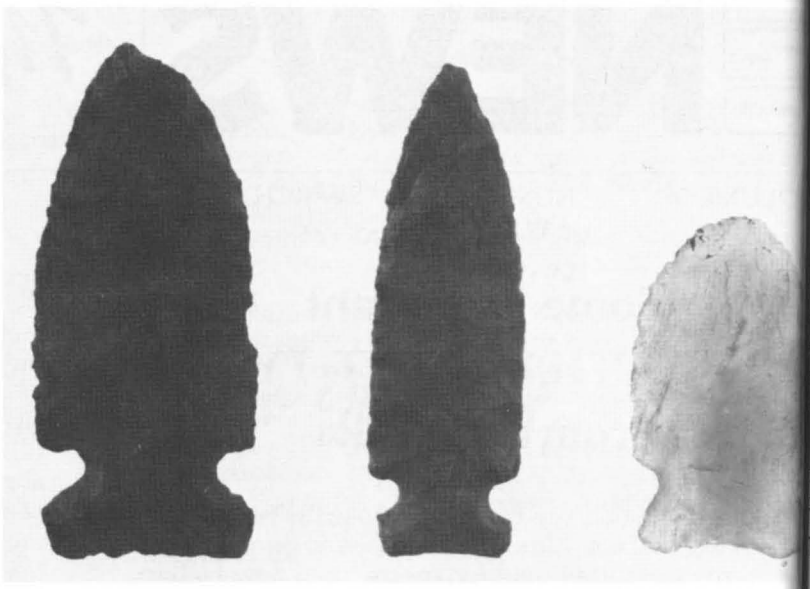
Age and cultural affiliation. The Alberta point belongs to the late Paleo-Indian or Early Archaic Period and is associated with the Cody Complex along with the Scottsbluff and Eden points and the Cody knife. It has been associated with an extinct form of *Bison* at the Hudson-Meng site in Dawes County. This site was excavated under the direction of Larry D. Agenbroad of Chadron State College. A radiocarbon sample from this site produced a date of 7845 B.C.

Distribution. Alberta points seem to be confined to the central and northern High Plains of the United States and Canada.

References. Bell 1960; Wormington 1957.



Alberta Points



Big Sandy Points

Big Sandy Points

Big Sandy is a cover term for a whole range of side-notched points. It is a medium to large sized point ranging in length from about 1¾ to 3½ inches. The length is generally two or three times the width. Its most distinctive feature is the opposed side notches placed near the base. The edges of the blade are usually convex and the base is concave to straight. The widest part is just above the notches.

Age and cultural affiliation. The Big Sandy point appears during the Middle Archaic in Missouri and seems to drop out by the end of the Late Archaic. In Iowa and eastern Nebraska, Big Sandy (Logan Creek) points are associated with bison kills at about 5000 B.C.

Distribution. Big Sandy points are found across most of the eastern United States and have also been found in Wyoming. They seem to be more common in eastern Nebraska than in the western part of the state, and they are rare in the Sand Hills. Geographical and morphological varieties have been assigned a number of type names including Logan Creek, Raddatz, Graham Cave, and Black Sand Notched.

References. Bell 1960; Chapman 1975; Kivett 1962; Ritzenthaler 1967.

Clovis Points

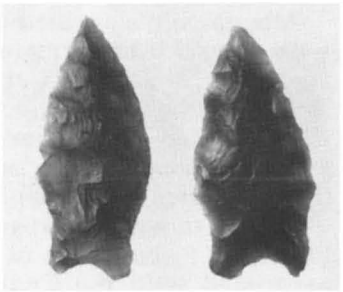
Clovis points are large lanceolate spear points wit parallel or slightly convex sides. They have a concav base and a channel flake (or flute) extending from th base toward the tip. Sometimes only one side of th point is fluted. Most examples range from 3 to 5 inche in length though a few may be somewhat shorter. Flak ing is irregular and there is considerable variation flake size. Basal and lateral grinding is always present

Age and cultural affiliation. In the Plains and Sout west, Clovis points are found in association wit mammoth rather than bison remains. In this area the date between 9500 and 9000 B.C., but in Rodgers She ter (Ozark highlands of Missouri) Clovis points we found in a level dated between 8580 and 8250 B.C.

Distribution. Clovis points are found across most the United States. According to Chapman, the greate concentration is in the Missouri-Mississippi-Oh River drainages. They are found throughout Nebrask with the possible exception of the Sand Hills, but nev in great quantity.

References. Bell 1958; Chapman 1975; Haury 19 Wormington 1957.

Clovis Point



Duncan Points

Duncan Points

Duncan points are well flaked, small to medium siz dart points with sloping shoulders, a nearly straig stem, and a notched base. They are usually 1 to 1 inches long, though a few examples may reach 2½ ches in length.

Age and cultural affiliation. Duncan points are sociated with the Early Middle Prehistoric Period Wyoming and with the Middle to Late Archaic Perio in northeastern Oklahoma. Dates range from 2500 to B.C. They are frequently found with McKean a Hanna points.

Distribution. Duncan points are found from Can southward into Oklahoma and Texas. In Nebraska th are most common on the High Plains but rare in Sand Hills and the eastern part of the state.

References. Frison, Wilson and Wilson 1974; Per 1970.

the midpoint. At the type site near Plainview, Texas (Krieger 1947) most examples were irregularly flaked (collateral flaking) but in one case narrow, ribbon-like flakes extended from one edge of the blade to the other (parallel flaking). Basal and lateral grinding to the midpoint is typical. They closely resemble Clovis points except for the lack of a flute. Meserve points may be resharpened Plainview points.

Age and cultural affiliation. Plainview points usually date to the Late Paleo-Indian or Early Archaic Period with maximum time ranges of 7000 to 2000 B.C. They are associated with extinct forms of *Bison* at several sites, including the Scottsbluff Bison Quarry (Barbour and Schultz 1932) and are well represented at the Lime Creek and Red Smoke sites (Davis 1962).

Distribution. Plainview points have been found from Alaska to northern Mexico. Most typical of the Great Plains, they are also found eastward into the eastern United States. They have been found throughout Nebraska.

References. Bell 1958; Krieger 1947; Wormington 1957.

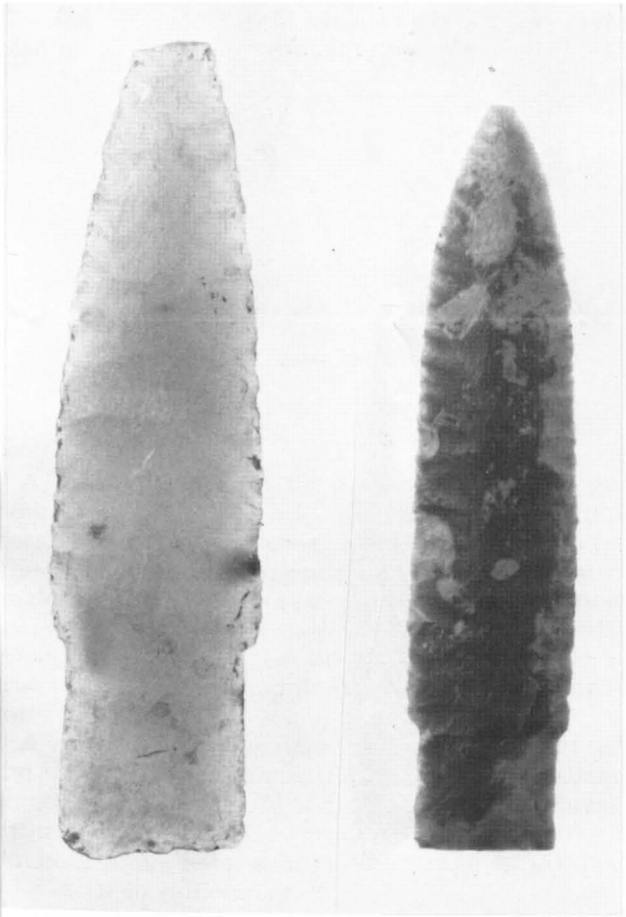
Scottsbluff Points

Scottsbluff points are large spear points with very slight shoulders and a broad, straight stem. They range from 2 to 5 inches in length. They are characterized by narrow pressure flakes which sometimes seem to extend from one side of the point to the other. The edges and base of the stem are usually ground smooth.

Age and cultural affiliation. The type name is derived from a discovery at the Scottsbluff Bison Quarry near Scottsbluff, Nebraska (Barbour and Schultz 1932). The type has also been excavated from the Lime Creek site in Frontier County (Davis 1962). It is associated with the Early Archaic of the eastern United States and the Late Paleo-Indian of the High Plains. Along with Alberta and Eden points it belongs to the Cody Complex which dates to about 7000 B.C.

Distribution. Scottsbluff points are found from the eastern United States to the Rocky Mountains and from Canada to Texas.

References. Bell 1958; Ritzenthaler 1967; Wormington 1957.



Scottsbluff Points

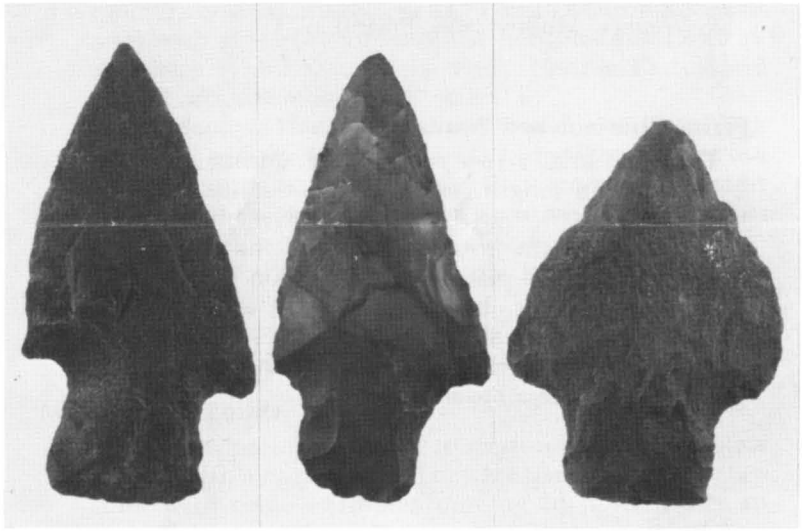
Stone Square Stemmed Points

These medium to large sized points have a broad rectangular stem and a straight base. Most specimens range from 1¾ to 5 inches in length. The blade is usually triangular with straight edges, but occasionally the edges are somewhat curved. Straight shoulders are typical but barbed shoulders do occur. Usually, they are ⅜ to ½ inch thick.

Age and cultural affiliation. Stone Square Stemmed points date from Middle to Late Archaic Periods, approximately 5000 to 1000 B.C. Similar types found in the Southern Plains may be somewhat later. They are associated with a foraging economy in the wooded river valleys. Many Stone Square Stemmed points were probably used as knives.

Distribution. The point type was defined in Missouri but similar types of about the same time range are found in Wisconsin, Illinois, and southward into Texas. They are most commonly found in eastern Nebraska.

References. Bell 1958, 1960; Chapman 1975; Perino 1968, 1971.



Stone Square Stemmed Points

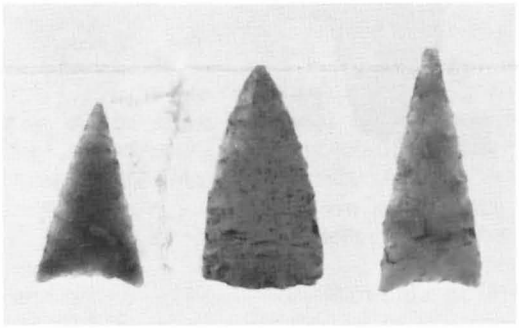
Triangular Points

These small triangular arrowpoints usually range from about 5/8 to 1½ inches long. Blade edges are straight to slightly convex and the base may be straight, concave, or convex.

Age and cultural affiliation. Triangular points are associated with Plains Side-notched points in Plains Village sites throughout Nebraska. They were popular after 900 A.D.

Distribution. Triangular points are found throughout most of the United States, often called by different names. They are called Fresno points in Texas and Oklahoma, and Madison points in Illinois and Wisconsin. In Wisconsin a variety with a deeply concave base is called a Dane Sharkstooth.

References. Bell 1960; Perino 1968; Ritzenthaler 1967.



Triangular Points

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